

# LT5403: SEMANTICS AND DISCOURSE

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## Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Semantics and Discourse

### Subject Code

LT - Linguistics and Translation

### Course Number

5403

### Academic Unit

Linguistics and Translation (LT)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

CTL5403 Semantics and Discourse

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course aims to introduce students to the study of meaning as it is realized at both the lexico-grammatical and discourse levels. The focus will be on how meaning is studied and analyzed from various perspectives, including semantics, pragmatics and discourse studies.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

| CILOs |                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Weighting (if app.) | DEC-A1 | DEC-A2 | DEC-A3 |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1     | Construe sense and reference in accordance with a theory of meaning. Discover and generate new ideas that are fundamental to the understanding of human language and world knowledge.                |                     | x      | x      |        |
| 2     | Identify word meaning and how word meaning is combined to give sentence meaning. Formulate and verify hypotheses that are descriptively and explanatorily adequate.                                  |                     | x      | x      | x      |
| 3     | Identify sentence relations and truth values of sentences. Apply knowledge to generate solutions to find out relations between sentences in accordance with a theory of truth-conditional semantics. |                     | x      | x      | x      |
| 4     | Distinguish tense from aspect. Analyse and classify different situation types and discover and formulate hypotheses that are observationally, descriptively and explanatorily adequate.              |                     | x      | x      | x      |
| 5     | Identify participants of sentences and relevant grammatical relations.                                                                                                                               |                     | x      | x      | x      |
| 6     | Describe speech act theory and conversational implicatures. Analyse texts by adopting different theories and analytic tools.                                                                         |                     | x      | x      | x      |

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

| LTAs |                      | Brief Description                                                                                                                                                                             | CILO No.         | Hours/week (if applicable) |
|------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1    | Lecture              | Students will learn theoretical foundations and concepts related to the above learning outcomes through lectures. Students will focus on applying these theories and interpret language data. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |                            |
| 2    | Class Activities     | Students will participate in discussions and exercises to deepen their understanding of the theoretical concepts introduced in the lecture and to apply these concepts to generate new ideas. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |                            |
| 3    | Independent learning | Students will access materials posted on the Blackboard periodically, and are encouraged to refer to these resources for independent learning.                                                | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |                            |

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

|   | ATs                                                                                                                | CILO No.         | Weighting (%) | Remarks ("- for nil entry)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Allow Use of GenAI? |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Assignments<br>Students are required to complete two assignments during the semester (30%; 15% each).              | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 | 30            | Students can use GenAI tools to brainstorm, gather information, solve problems, format references, and edit language. Students should give proper acknowledgment to all the content from GenAI tools that they incorporated into the assignment and keep a journal of their GenAI conversations. Students should not present texts generated or translated by GenAI tools as their own original work. | Yes                 |
| 2 | Mid-term quiz<br>A mid-term quiz will cover the materials taught in Weeks 1 to 6.                                  | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 | 30            | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | No                  |
| 3 | End-of-term test<br>An end-of-term test will be given to evaluate how well students have achieved the CILOs. (40%) | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 | 40            | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | No                  |

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)****Assessment Task**

1. Assignments

**Criterion**

Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in semantics and how they can be used in analysing the meaning of our language.

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Demonstrate strong evidence of capacity to analyse and superior grasp of basic concepts in semantics; and evidence of excellent understanding of key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.

**Good**

(B+, B, B-) Demonstrate some evidence of capacity to analyse and synthesize; grasp of basic concepts of semantics, and evidence of good understanding of key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.

**Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Demonstrate evidence of ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the study of semantics; adequate understanding of basic concepts of semantics and key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.

**Marginal**

(D) Demonstrate little understanding of basic concepts of semantics and key issues involved in meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.

**Failure**

(F) Demonstrate limited or virtually no understanding of basic concepts of semantics and key issues involved meaning of natural languages at lexical, phrasal, sentence and discourse levels.

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**Assessment Task**

2. Mid-term quiz

**Criterion**

Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in semantics and discourse analysis, and fundamental and key issues in natural language semantics. Show the capacity to analyse meaning at all levels of language.

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Demonstrate excellent understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis, and strong evidence of capacity to analyse natural language semantics.

**Good**

(B+, B, B-) Demonstrate good understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in Semantics and discourse analysis, and some evidence of capacity to analyse natural language semantics.

**Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Demonstrate adequate understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.

**Marginal**

(D) Demonstrate little understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.

**Failure**

(F) Demonstrate limited or virtually no understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.

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**Assessment Task**

3. End-of-term test

**Criterion**

Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in semantics and discourse analysis, and fundamental and key issues in natural language semantics. Show the capacity to analyse meaning at all levels of language.

**Excellent**

(A+, A, A-) Demonstrate excellent understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis, and strong evidence of capacity to analyse natural language semantics.

**Good**

(B+, B, B-) Demonstrate good understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in Semantics and discourse analysis, and some evidence of capacity to analyse natural language semantics.

**Fair**

(C+, C, C-) Demonstrate adequate understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.

**Marginal**

(D) Demonstrate little understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.

**Failure**

(F) Demonstrate limited or virtually no understanding of basic concepts and fundamental issues in semantics and discourse analysis.

## Part III Other Information

**Keyword Syllabus**

Semantic structure and analysis: concept, mental representation, word meaning, semantic rules; sense and reference; meaning relations: synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, homonymy, meronymy, polysemy; semantic decomposition; collocation, lexical sets and semantic fields; idioms; presupposition.  
 Sentence relations and truth: logic and truth, propositional logic, necessary truth, a priori truth and analyticity, entailment and presupposition.  
 Sentence semantics: simple and relative tenses, situation types and aspect, thematic roles, thematic role grids.  
 Language as communication: context and inference; pragmatics and speech act theory; Gricean maxims; the cooperative principle; politeness strategies; implicature.  
 Text analysis: functional-semantic analysis; rhetorical structure theory; texture and textuality.

**Reading List****Compulsory Readings**

| Title |                                                                        |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Saeed, John I. (2009) Semantics. 3rd edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. |

**Additional Readings**

| Title |                                                                                                                                  |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Cann, Ronnie. (1993) Formal Semantics. Cambridge: CUP.                                                                           |
| 2     | Cann, Ronnie, Ruth Kempson and Eleni Gregoromichelaki. (2009) Semantics: An Introduction to Meaning in Language. Cambridge: CUP. |
| 3     | Chierchia, Chierchia and Sally McConnell-Ginet. (2000) Meaning and Grammar. 2nd edition. London: MIT Press.                      |
| 4     | Heim, Irene and Angelika Kratzer. (1998) Semantics in Generative Grammar. Oxford: Blackwell.                                     |

|    |                                                                                                                       |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5  | Hurford, James R., Brendan Heasley and Michael B. Smith. (2007) Semantics: A Coursebook. 2nd edition. Cambridge: CUP. |
| 6  | Johnstone, B. (2007) Discourse Analysis. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.                                                |
| 7  | Kearns, Kate. (2011) Semantics. 2nd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.                                            |
| 8  | Kempson, Ruth M. (1977) Semantic Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.                                       |
| 9  | Portner, Paul H. (2005) What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.              |
| 10 | de Swart, Henriëtte. (1998) Introduction to Natural Language Semantics. Stanford: CSLI Publications.                  |